

# RESEARCH: TOWARDS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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**Abstract**— *Research is a process of discovering the nature and pattern of relationships that exist among diverse phenomena that permits prediction and control. Finding the uniformities underlying these phenomena and integrating them into a defined structure is a tenuous and complicated effort. This is made more complex with the prevalence of mixed tools, types, and methods applicable to different disciplines. Furthermore, researches are increasingly collaborating to conduct cross functional studies singularly or collaboratively. Thus, selection and adopting a suitable research method for carrying out a given research can frustrate the realization of the aims and objectives of the endeavour. This study examines the nature of this challenge in the researchers' attempt to understand the various research approaches applicable to different disciplines, identifying the tools, types and methods deployed in various contexts. Research involves integrated processes commencing with the identification of a researchable problem that dovetails into writing of the report. This highlights the doctrinal approach, from the legal disciplines, which places reliance on secondary sources such as research textbooks, journal articles, online materials amongst others. This research explores a mixed bag, pluralist approach. The objective is that the cross disciplinary approach to research and research writing will become the template for integrated research. This paper concludes that the type of research determines the method, type and ultimately determines the type and method used in the analysis and presentation of data.*

**Keywords**— “Research,” “Literature Review,” “Multidisciplinary,” “Doctrinal,” “Hypothesis.”

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, research is an academic activity that involves integrated but systemic step by step methods and procedures which must be particularly most suited for achieving, among others, the research aims and objectives as well as securing consensus among professional colleagues. In as much as there are various types, methods and procedures it is noteworthy that the research topic determines the type, method, and procedures to be used in the research. This element of consensus mentioned above, is a critical factor which is indicated by feedback and suggestions

from co-professionals. Hence researchers are concerned, rewarded and rated by number of citations and references to their work beyond pecuniary benefits. Research efforts commence with an identification of research gaps, formulation of research problems and conclude with conducting the investigation around the gaps and problem areas before the writing or presentation of the research report. These research methods and implications are examined along with other sub-themes as in this paper.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS OF KNOWING

Research originates from the French word *recherché* meaning searching closely for the “very unusual, not generally known about, and chosen with great care in order to make people admire your knowledge and style.” To this end, there exists a plethora of definitions of research by various authors. It is a voyage of discovery and systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge through the building of awareness, understanding and sharing of [facts](#), [information](#), [descriptions](#), or [skills](#), which is acquired through [experience](#) or [education](#) by [perceiving](#), [discovering](#), or [learning](#). It could be in a person’s mind or possessed by people generally. Research, being a method of knowing and answering research questions Kerlinger relying on definitions provided by C.S. Peirce over a century ago, discusses four methods of knowing: tenacity, intuition, authority, and science. In summary of this subsection, research is the gathering of evidence or information for ascertaining an assumption or verifying some hypothesis. It is an inquiry for the verification of a fresh theory or for supplementing prevailing theories by new knowledge. Research is so versatile that each time a person engages in thinking and finds a suitable answer to a question, such a person is engaging in a research

Furthermore, research is divided into two major sectors, academic and private, which are sometimes called basic and applied respectively. Research in both sectors are equally important and in many cases are integrated. Legal research is a systematic search for information on a specific field or area of law involving the processes of gathering information and formulated legal issues with the view to achieving stated objectives of the research to support legal decision-making which are achieved by engaging in a systematic investigation. Legal research is conducting investigation to discover the principles and rules of law applicable to a particular problem and to discover what the legal answer is. In this regard legal, Journalism, advertising, media research, etc are applied research that aimed at solving given and existing problems.

Streib, posits that research is something we all do, whether for buying a new car, choosing a favourite wine, or agreeing to marry an attractive lover. Some research is a necessary evil, some a delightful passage, some unmitigated drudgery. His general concern is to hone the concept of legal research, at least as it is manifested by law professors and lawyers. More specifically, how does academic research and advocacy research differ in the world of law and what unique obligations might such differences suggest for the law professoriate? The general issue is the difference, perhaps conflict, between research aimed primarily at discovering truth and expanding knowledge versus research aimed primarily at mounting an argument to achieve victory for a client or some law reform goal. Invariably, and from Streib’s point of view,

academic research permits the researcher to define the topic and the important points to be studied, and encourages the researcher to report everything found of any value to the field while advocacy research typically begins with a narrowly drawn topic and issue, and the researcher is encouraged to report only the findings which bolster the advocate's primary argument, either greatly discounting or remaining conveniently silent about conflicting evidence. This researcher agrees entirely with Streib.

On the other hand, Wihbey encourages the development of a new core skill in journalism education by emphasising the habit of literature review which means not only pulling the previous “clips” on a subject but also efficiently reviewing relevant research studies to enrich the engagement with co-experts and assure speedier access to deeper knowledge. According to Wihbey, “such habits can produce journalism that is more informed and durable — that is less susceptible to critiques that it is mere “he said, she said” reporting, or deficient or biased in some way, whether intentionally or not. Such deeper stories constitute what we are calling “knowledge-based journalism” for all intents and purposes. I concur and concede that achievement of this competency requires the need to develop strong information-seeking habits, basic familiarity with databases, sophisticated Web search skills as well as a working fluency with key research terms and academic methods. Most importantly, he said, this “does not mean that they need high-level statistical training: They merely need a level of comfort, which can be developed with practice and experience” and this a caution to overbearing professors on application of core statistical methods on journalism, arts, humanities and social science students.

Journalism can benefit from a closer relationship with social science, even while preserving its traditional values, approaches and techniques. In a digital world, where the pool of available knowledge is rising and competition for attention is increasing, practitioners and scholars in this sphere should help the profession maintain its distinctive position in public discourse by imbibing these values.

With regard to methodology, depending on the research area or topic, a good research may combine two or more methodologies. This type of approach is known as mixed methods or triangulation in some disciplines. The mixed method is complex and challenging hence the need for the researcher to properly think carefully about the goals of the research to ascertain whether it demands a combined method or a single-but all-encompassing method. Due to the benefits of mixed methods, they are now increasingly used and have gained greater acceptance across several disciplines. Since the object of carrying out a research, especially applied research is to arrive at a solution for a given problem, the available data and the unknown aspects of the problem have to be related to each other to find a possible solution. In this regard, research methods and processes have to be separable and distinguishable by researchers. They can be discussed under the following heads:

## **1. Research Process**

- a) Research Methods
- b) Research Procedures

- c) Hypothesis
- d) Data Analyses
- 2. Research Approaches**
- a) Qualitative Research Methods
- b) Content Analyses
- c) Survey Research
- d) Longitudinal Research
- e) Experimental Research
- 3. Data Analyses**
- 4. Research Applications**

It is a fact that some research methods are peculiar in certain disciplines. However, when a particular method is adopted for research in a discipline, certain challenges may be encountered and much more when the research is multidisciplinary and requires a mixed method. Such researchers are tasked and could become frustrated. This study advises that if a researcher is caught in this scenario and he does not have multidisciplinary training and skills he should collaborate with other professionals in the gap areas.

Generally, to compare is to examine two or more entities by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or among them. Comparative method of research is a unique, systematic and jurisprudential strategy applied, by virtue of similarities and differences between the diverse legal systems, to acquire new understanding regarding the specific topic. This method may compare two or more legal systems, or compare phenomena or concepts within a given legal system. The approach to the comparative method is similar to that of comparative law which investigates the relationship, above all the historical relationship between legal systems or between rules of more than one system. It is now a fact that comparative law is a method of study which De Cruz categorically asserts is neither a branch of law nor a legal body of rules but rather a method of study. The rationale for comparative study or method is the contemporary realisation that a lawyer like any other professional cannot limit his attention only to what occurs within his country's jurisdiction and borders. Further, the importance of learning from the experience of other nations is obvious within the fields of natural sciences, medicine and technology. The importance of learning from other nation's experience is advocated for in the legal field. Likewise, given the fact that the entire world has become a global village, comparative method of research constitutes an important method in conducting research in law. To enclose legal science within the boundaries of one nation, and to pretend to explain or develop it without taking into account foreign thought and experience is to limit both the possibilities of knowledge and the sphere of action of the jurist. No more than history, economics, political science or sociology, can law be properly studied from a purely national point of view. Juridical nationalism is provincialism, and irreconcilable with a truly scientific spirit; it impoverishes and indeed is dangerous to the development and even the application of a national law.

When the quantitative or statistical method of research is used in a legal research, lawyers/legal researchers may face challenges which can be overcome by the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach to research known as academic collaboration. The rationale for this is so that persons who are knowledgeable in the numerical or quantitative aspect of research are brought in to carry the analysis in the research while the lawyer/legal researcher focuses on drawing inferences based on observable/verifiable data. Such innovation could be applied to a research on the reasons for the increased number of convictions in certain offences or the reason for congested prisons. Further, in order to overcome the geographical challenge as well as the language and cultural barriers experienced under the comparative method of research, the researcher can adopt information and communication technology, use of competent interpreter(s) and engaging in focused group discussion where the researcher gets acculturated by living among the research subject and learning their cultures.

It is noteworthy that the second and third research methods above are generally regarded as analytical research tools. When using a particular research method, researchers are advised to clearly state and describe the method adopted. The choice of research method(s) should directly relate to the statement of problem. The choice of method must be justified by intimating the reader of the appropriateness of the method for the research work. An age-long saying that 'if we dig in the garden, we use a spade. If we search for oil, we employ a roc-drill. In other words, the choice of tools depends on the depth to which we intend to probe.'

This method entails the collection and analysis of numerical data and the application of statistical tests. It is based on the quantitative measurements of some characteristics and applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantities. Under the quantitative method, testing of hypothesis and use of statistical procedures leads the researcher to draw inferences about the population studied. It is noteworthy that because of its statistical nature, the quantitative method is rarely used in law/legal research as opposed to the social science and science inclined researches where it is popular. In a nutshell, its nature is objective, deductive and focuses on measuring phenomena. Testing of hypothesis and use of statistical procedures leads the researcher to draw inferences about the population studied is typical of the quantitative method rarely used in law/legal research as opposed to the social science and science inclined researches where it is popular. In a nutshell, its nature is objective, deductive and focuses on measuring phenomena. It is noteworthy that the quantitative method is peculiar to statistical type of research.<sup>1</sup> Under statistical research, information or data are gathered using statistics or quantitative methods from which inferences are drawn on the actual workings of the law or on the subject matter/focus of the research. It involves the collection and collation of data in a methodological way. However, it is noteworthy that because this involves quantitative analysis and requires expertise it is not a very popular way of conducting research legal research as stated above. Further, this involves going to the field in order to collect data

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<sup>1</sup> T.I. Akomolede, 'Types of Legal Research', being an extract from the class notes dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2017 in Advanced Research Methodology and Legal Writing I (Law 801) for LL.M 2017/2018 Academic Session.

through surveys opinion polls, participant observation and further, reliance on instruments lie questionnaires and interviews.

The empirical method of research is data-based research which relies on experience or observation, often without due regard for system and theory. Under this method, the conclusions reached are capable of being verified by observation or experiment. It is noteworthy that the empirical method of research is also known as the experimental type. This method is ideal for a research which strives to address the issue of lack of information on the particular subject of the research through the carrying out of field work or experiment. This is done in addition to review of relevant literature on the subject matter.

### III. CONCLUSION

Owing to advancements This paper examines the various types and methods of research. In this regard, a research method entails the processes adopted by a researcher in order to obtain reliable and valid data or information about a phenomenon which constitutes the objects of the research efforts and achieve the research aims and objectives. On the other hand, research methodology is the science of all the methods and procedures used in a research. Further, it explains the concepts of research and legal research in order to distinguish them in terms of scope, rationale and objectives.

It is sometimes the notion among students of research that in order to carry out 'proper' research, they have to engage in empirical collection of data through interviews, surveys, questionnaires, experiment or case study among others. However, this is not the case in real sense as rigorous research can also be purely theoretical or doctrinal and this is evidenced in the fact that there exist several academic books and articles that were not products of empirical studies yet they are excellent and rich in their own right and content. Regardless of whether a researcher intends to engage in empirical collection of data, the researcher must still have a theoretical (literature) base from which the researcher proceeds with the research. This shows that the empirical method of research as well as other methods are not exclusive as to exclude theoretical considerations in their respective methods.

In summary, based on the fact that some research methods are peculiar in certain disciplines and when a particular method is adopted for research in a discipline, certain challenges may be encountered and much more when the research is multidisciplinary and requires a mixed method, this study advises that researchers caught in this scenario and do not have multidisciplinary training and skills rather than regress into frustration, should collaborate with other professionals in the gap areas in order not to truncate the research effort..

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